Tale Feathers

November
2005

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Owls Up Close:

A Movie

Did you know that owls have 3-dimensional hearing? That they can detect a mouse under two feet of snow and strike prey in total darkness? That they can see better on a moonless midnight than we can at noon? That the flight of even the largest owls is virtually soundless? These are just a few of the many interesting aspects of owl physiology and behavior sprinkled throughout this beautifully photographed documentary that includes footage of all 18 species found in North America. A joint production of the National Audubon Society and the Nature Science Network, it was written by Kenn Kaufman and contains a segment on when and how to best observe owls.

Join us on Tuesday, November 15th at 7:30 p.m. at the Powder Valley Nature Center to enjoy this wonderful film. Running time is 55 minutes long and will be preceded by a few Society announcements. Please bring a friend as the show is free to all.

From the intersection of Interstates 44 & 270, take Watson Rd. to Geyer Rd. Turn north on Geyer for 200 yds. to Cragwold Rd. Go west on Cragwold for 1 mi. to nature center entrance on right. Follow drive to parking lot. Enter building through left entrance and proceed to the auditorium.
Questions, call Mitch Leachman at 314-739-5112.

St. Louis Audubon Society

Opportunities and Announcements

Mission Statement
Of
The St. Louis
Audubon Society

Help our community sustain biological Diversity through Nature.

Goals
To foster an awareness and understanding Of birds and other wildlife and their habitats

To educate our community so people can make informed decisions about the natural world.

Seventh Annual Kennedy Woods Bush Honeysuckle Removal
Sunday, November 13
Help us with bird habitat restoration!

Honeysuckle is an invasive, non-native plant with dense foliage that shades the ground, preventing native species from growing. Thanks to the help of many volunteers over the past six years, most of the bush honeysuckle has been removed from **Kennedy Woods in Forest Park**, and native plants are starting to come back. We are now in a maintenance phase of honeysuckle control in Kennedy Woods. This phase has two parts: removing new honeysuckles as they sprout, and removing honeysuckles from areas near the woods. This year we plan to work in the area south of Kennedy Woods. Clearing this area will help prevent honeysuckle from spreading back into the woods.

Date: Sunday, Nov. 13
(Rain date: Nov. 20)
Time: Two shifts - 10:00 a.m. to noon and noon to 2:00 p.m.
Place: Meet at the shelter at the Kennedy Forest trailhead, by the circle drive off of Wells Drive in Forest Park, St. Louis, MO. See web site for a map.
Bring: Cutting tools (loppers, small saw), gloves.
We will provide snacks and water.

If you wish to volunteer, simply send an e-mail to honeysuckle_signup@treeswallow.com and let us know:
* Your name
* Which shift you prefer, 1st or 2nd
* How many people you'll be bringing

This will help us estimate how many volunteers to plan for, but even if you don't sign up, you can still show up and help!

You can also use a sign up form and get additional information at our web site: http://treeswallow.com/honeysuckle

Thanks, and we hope to see you there!

Contacts:
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THE AMAZING DAY AT CARLYLE LAKE!!

On September 24, 2005 the SLAS joined the Illinois Ornithological Society (IOS) for the annual Carlyle Lake Pelagic—-Quite an amazing day for all of us able to attend! The trip was led by Joe Eades and myself, with much help (and Thanks!) to Pat Leuders and Mike Grant! 91 species of birds were observed between the hours of 7AM and 6:30PM

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We began the day at Hazlet S.P. for land birding. There, the group observed a total of 16 species of warblers, of which highlights included:
(1) Cape May Warbler
(1-2) Golden-winged Warbler
(1) Blackburnian Warbler
(1) Bay-breasted Warbler
Other birds of note included 1-Swainson's Thrush, 2-Yellow-billed Cuckoo's and many Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. From there it was time to get on the boats and head out on the lake. After a bit of trouble with keeping one of the boat's engine running, we were all off.....again.... and word over the radios had it there was an adult SABINE'S GULL out on the lake. After about 30 minutes of searching for the Sabines Gull my boat was finally able to see it!! And what a beauty it was!! An adult breeding SABINES GULL sitting on the water less than 50 feet from us. However, no sooner than seeing the gull, word was quickly spreading over the radios of a RED PHALAROPE sitting on the water near another one of the boats in our group. So, off we went to see the RED PHALAROPE. Just as we neared, the bird decided to take flight, however we were quickly able to catch up and see the distinctively thick bill and the broad white wing stripe. Eventually we were all able to creep within about 50 yards of the phalarope and convince ourselves of what we were seeing. Shortly after observing this bird, some in the group were also able to see at least 1-RED-NECKED PHALAROPE (juvenile) on the water. This
made for great comparison's of the Red Phalarope observed just a moment ago.
From here, everyone decided to go back to find the Sabines Gull. The looks at this gull could not have been any better as the bird sat less than 15 yards away on the water. This allowed for great photo opportunities for those of us with cameras. Other birds observed while in the pontoon boats included:
1-Franklin's Gull
1-immature Laughing Gull
3 species of tern; Black, Caspian and Forster's

After the boat ride and lunch those who stayed headed to Whitetail Access. There the highlight was one more RED-NECKED PHALAROPE. This bird capped a perfect day all of those who did not observe the Red-necked Phalarope earlier from the boats. Thanks to all who came (and for your patience with
the trip leaders!)

Birding Trips for November, December and January

John Solodar

November 5, Saturday - Horseshoe Lake Area Mike Thelen will lead this trip to Horseshoe Lake and some surrounding areas. We'll hope to find various ducks, gulls, wintering sparrows and whatever else may be coming through. We'll start at 8:00 AM for this half day trip.

November 19, Saturday - Busch/Weldon Spring - This trip to Busch Conservation Area and Weldon Springs starts at 8:00 AM. Lots of winter birds should be here by now and we may see Harris' Sparrow, both nuthatches and other interesting land birds. The lakes should offer a variety of gulls and ducks. This trip will be led by Mike Thelen.

December 10, Saturday - Riverlands - This trip starts at 9:00 am and will be led by Mike Thelen. Bring lots of warm clothes as the winter wind can be quite stressful at RMBS . (RMBS is the now abbreviation for Riverlands which is now known as Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary.) We'll be looking for odd gulls, lots of ducks and maybe some surprises such as scoters. This is the time of the year when a lot of errant migrants make their appearance and RMBS is a good spot for them.

January 14, Saturday - Riverlands - This trip starts at 9:00 am and will be co-led by Paul Bauer and Dave Rogles. RMBS is our winter hotspot for interesting birds as it is the time of year when the really rare gulls often show up. With luck we will also have some Longspurs and Snow Buntings around. Again, dress warmly against the winter winds at RMBS. Some of those hunter's charcoal/iron filings hand warmers will also serve you well.

How to get there

Riverlands - Take Hwy 367 north from I-270. The designation changes to Hwy 67 just beyond the 4th traffic light, but continue. Turn right on last road just before the Clark Bridge at the Mississippi River. (Fisca gas station at this turn.) Turn right on the first road and park in the Teal Pond parking lot.

Horseshoe Lake - Take I-70 east across Poplar Street ridge. Exit at Highway 111 (exit 6) and turn left. Go north a few miles to the State park entrance (on left). Meet at the first parking lot on the right.

Busch Conservation Area - Take U.S.40/I-64 west into St. Charles County. Take Hwy 94 south from U.S 40 about 1 mile to Hwy D. Turn right and go about 1.5 miles to the entrance on the right. Turn left at the "T" to Hampton Lake and meet in the parking lot.

Marsh Bird Monitoring Completed at B.K. Leach Conservation Area

Brian Loges and John Solodar

With the persistence and skill of several volunteers from the St Louis Audubon Society, an initial marsh bird survey was completed last June at the Bittern Basin unit of B.K. Leach Conservation Area. The goal of the survey is to document the presence of breeding marsh birds with an emphasis being place on rails and bitterns. Twenty points were sampled using playback tapes; each point was sample three times in the month of June.

The final tally: 3 least bittern, 5 sora, 7 pied-billed grebe, and 17 king rail observations were included in the official count. The king rail count was much higher than expected, especially considering the low water levels and the species[1] rarity throughout the state. By evaluating the distribution of the occurrences, it is estimated that a minimum of 4 active king rail territories, 2 least bittern territories, 1 pied-billed grebe territory, and a possible sora territory were established on the area for each species. The data was also used to direct king rail and least bittern nest searches. Several nest like platforms and a single broken king rail egg were discovered, but active nests were never located in 2005.

Additional bird sightings of interest included one Sandhill Crane and some American Bitterns. The participants all enjoyed being out on the levee over the marsh during the summer evenings. It was warm but pleasant.

The survey will be expanded in 2006 to include an additional 30 points covering a recently restored wetland pool which means that we will need more volunteers. One does not have to be an expert birder to help in this endeavor as the key component is being able to hear the birds answer the calls played on tapes. Keep an eye out for an announcement in early 2006 for an opportunity to volunteer for the 2006 sampling effort.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT
John Torrey Berger, Jr.

This month I would like to call to your attention some of the projects that SLAS has and/or will participate in partnership with other organizations. Through these partnering arrangements, we are able to leverage both our time and resources.

We have had several such contacts with the St. Louis County Parks Department. SLAS (along with several others of the local conservation oriented organizations) has had a representative on the Citizens' Advisory Committee which was instrumental in developing the plan for the 700 acres of wetlands at Creve Coeur Park. We have provided County Parks with photos and text for informational kiosks for the wetlands area. In the past, we have provided trip leaders for County Parks' "Bird and Learn Program." In the future, we would hope to continue and expand that program, as well as develop what we are calling "A Day in the Marsh" program at the Creve Coeur wetlands with County Parks and possibly some other local conservation organization.

Although we have several areas of disagreement with the U.S. Corp of Engineers, we are in full agreement and partnership with them in their efforts to manage the Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary for game and non-game migratory species. In the past, we have partnered with the Corps on their Least Tern project and survey. We will be participating in their Wings of Spring Birding Festival next spring. In the future, we hope to be involved with them (both in planning and resource provision) in their efforts to improve wetlands and shorebird habitat at Riverlands.

One of our most exciting partnerships involves our participation in the Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative (MoBCI). SLAS has two board members in leadership positions in MoBCI. What is so exciting about this coming together of some 30 plus bird oriented groups is the fact that it has shown that the primary goals of conservation groups (e.g., Audubon and Coalition for the Environment) and hunting groups (e.g., Ducks Unlimited and Wild Turkey Association) are the same, and that they are able to move forward with on-the-ground conservation projects with no meaningful disagreements. The economic and political potential of such a combination is awesome to contemplate.

Last, but not least, is our most often partner, the best conservation department in the 50 U.S. States, the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC). As I mentioned in last month's Report, we have partnered with MDC with respect to Chimney Swift towers, Barn Owl houses, and Rail and Bittern surveys. MDC often supplies experts for Audubon monthly program and provides printed materials for use in our educational efforts. In the future, we hope to help with more Swift towers and continue to expand our "citizen scientist" survey efforts with them.

Save the Date!

Holiday Open House at the Green Center
Sunday, December 4, 2005 from 1-4 pm

The St. Louis Audubon Society and the Webster Groves Nature Study Society are invited to gather again at the Green Center in University City to celebrate the holidays. The Center offers a congenial atmosphere of meeting rooms surrounded by a beautiful outdoor space. If weather permits, tours of the grounds will be offered by the Green Center staff.

This year, the Center has agreed to allow limited parking in the driveway for our senior members. More details next month ~ mark your calendars now for this special event!

Whitney and Anna Harris Conservation Forum 2005:

The Living World, Saint Louis Zoo
Wednesday, November 9, 2005

Each year the International Center for Tropical Ecology (ICTE) at the University of Missouri-St. Louis organizes and co-sponsors the Conservation Forum. This year, through a generous gift to the ICTE from Whitney and Anna Harris, the even has been named in their honor. The forum is co-sponsored by the Missouri Botanical Gardens, Missouri Department of Conservation, The Nature Conservancy (Missouri Chapter), St. Louis Zoo, and the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

This year's forum will be held from 6:00-9:00 p.m. on Wednesday, November 9, 2005 at the Living World, Saint Louis Zoo and the theme will be: **Floodplains: Conservation and Development?** Panelists will be: Dr. Nicholas Pinter, Associate Professor, Department of Geology, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, Ted Heisel, Executive Director, Missouri Coalition for the Environment and Adolphus A. Busch, Chairman of the Board, Great Rivers Habitat Alliance. St. Louis Audubon will have a display table at the even. This is a wonderful opportunity to meet other people interested in conservation. The even is free, but you can register in advance to get a name tag and also sign up to receiv a box dinner. See info below:

RESERVATION FORM

Please reserve _____ free admisions in advance to the Witney and Anna Harris Conservation Forum.

Please provide a box dinner (sandwich, chips, cookie, and soda) for ____ at $12.00 per person

TOTAL: _____

Please indicate, with number required, meal choice:

Ham & cheese:_____ Turkey & cheese: _____ Vegetarian sandwich:_____

Name (s) and Affiliation(optional) for Name Tag:

_____

Address: _____

_____

Telephone Number: _____

Email address: _____

Your check, made payable to the **International Center for Tropical Ecology**, is your reservation. Please mail or fax by **Friday, October 28, 2005** to: International Center for Tropical Ecology, University of Missouri-St. Louis, 1 University Boulevard, St. Louis, MO 63121-4499

If you prefer, you pay by bank card: MasterCard_____ Visa_____

Account#: _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ Expiration Date: _____/_____

Signature:_____

For more information, please contact Ms. Pat Hinton at (314)516-6203, or fax (314) 516-6233, or email at *hintonpa@umsl.edu*.

The Other Game at Busch Stadium
Mary Dueren

I had never been to a National League Championship baseball game before. The excitement was palpable! Cardinal Nation had turned out to urge our fearless players on to another victory over those pesky Houston Astro's.
Our seats were high up, Section 378 on the east side of Busch Stadium. The Gateway Arch behind us and the left field foul pole just in front of us. The roar of crowd was constant and deafening. Everyone had "thundersticks". The game quickly became a pitcher's dual.
In a slow moment, in a flash, a bird flew out from the ledge of the stadium. It didn't go far. It flew from one side of set of lights to the other. You usually see Morning doves, pigeons or grackles flying around the stadium, looking for a fast food meal.
But this bird didn't fit any of those birds' descriptions. The bird flew out again, this time acting like a flycatcher, catching a large moth. I now realize this is a small falcon, darting around the lights of the stadium. (I wished now that I hadn't left my small binoculars in the car!). The bird had white belly and dark head, maybe a peregrine. How smart is this bird to realize that there are easy, juicy pickings around the bright lights of Busch Stadium!
We continued to watch the flights around the lights. I am not sure anyone else witnessed the game of survival going on above our heads. Everyone else was watching the Cardinals trying to survive over those pesky Astro's. We last saw our mystery falcon at 9:45 pm. The bird flew up the light standards, ruffled his feathers, and headed east. His game was successful, the baseball Cardinals were not.
There's always next year!

Tale Feathers

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St. Louis Audubon Society 2004 - 2005

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As a joint member with National Audubon, you will receive National Audubon's quarterly magazine (Audubon) as well as St. Louis Audubon Society's Newsletter (Tale Feathers). Now you also have the opportunity to join only the St. Louis Audubon Society, receive Tale Feathers, and participate in the educational and conservation activities of St. Louis Audubon. There is no distinction between individual and family membership. Dues cover all members at the same address. For information, call (314) 822-6595.

Use this form to join St. Louis Audubon / National Audubon

For joint membership in St. Louis Audubon Society and National Audubon Society, Make checks payable to **National Audubon Society** and mail to St. Louis Audubon Society, P.O.Box 220227, Kirkwood, MO. 63122

_____Membership/$35 For renewal in the National Audubon Society, we recommend that you use the forms supplied by National Audubon. For more information, contact Anne Rankin Horton at 636-256-3402.

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